

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 17110

DEPARTMENT ALSO PASS AID

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGEN EG
SUBJECT: U.S. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN EGYPT -
- POPULATION CONTROL

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1. IN THE CONTEXT OF THE STIPULATED U.S. OBJECTIVE IN EGYPT TO ENCOURAGE GOE TO UNDERTAKE NEEDED ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT REFORM MEASURES, ALL CONCERNED ELEMENTS OF THIS MISSION HAVE SOUGHT TO PRESS EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES TO UNDERTAKE A MORE VIGOROUS POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAM. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, THIS IS AN UPHILL TASK IN WHAT IS BASICALLY AN ORTHODOX MUSLIM SOCIETY AND IN THE ABSENCE OF A STRONG LEAD FROM SENIOR LEVEL EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS. THE RECENT PARIS CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING HAS HELPED TO MAKE EGYPT MORE AWARE OF DONER GOVERNMENTS' CONCERN ABOUT THE ABSENCE OF AN ACTIVE POPULATION CONTROL PROGRAM.

2. FOR NOW AT LEAST, THE LESSON SEEMS TO HAVE STRUCK HOME AS EVIDENCED BY AN UNWONTED SPURT OF ACTIVITY ON
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THE POPULATION CONTROL FRONT. THE EGYPTIAN PRESS, ESPECIALLY AKHBAR AL-YOM AND AL-AHRAM PUBLISHING HOUSES, HAS IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS DEVOTED UNUSUAL ATTENTION TO POPULATION ISSUES IN EGYPT. ON JUNE 27, AL-AKHBAR'S GAMIL GEORGE WARNED OF THE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES OF EGYPT'S POPULATION EXPLOSION. JULY 1 AKHBAR ARTICLE BY SAID SOMBOL CALLS FOR NATIONAL POPULATION PLANNING AS

ONLY WAY TO STOP RUNAWAY POPULATION GROWTH AND PROTECT EGYPT'S FUTURE. JULY 12 AKHER SAA ARTICLE WARNS THAT ALL GAINS ACHIEVED THROUGH DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ARE LIKELY TO BE ERASED BY POPULATION INCREASE. ON THREE CONSECUTIVE DAYS AL-AHRAM RAN FULL PAGE ARTICLES ON POPULATION ISSUES BY SCIENCE EDITOR SALAH GALAL. HIS FIRST ARTICLE, JULY 1, IDENTIFIED BACKWARD STATUS OF EGYPTIAN WOMEN AS MAJOR CAUSE OF POPULATION PROBLEM; HIS JULY 2 ARTICLE TRACED HISTORY OF EGYPT'S POPULATION INCREASE AND REASONS FOR MIGRATIONS TO CAIRO; IN JULY 3 ARTICLE HE ASCRIBED POOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES TO LARGE POPULATION INCREASES. IN JULY 4 EDITORIAL OF AL-AHRAM, BAHERA MUKTAR CALLS FOR NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING. AL-AHRAM ECONOMIC EDITOR IBRAHIM NAFIE FOLLOWED THIS UP ON JULY 7 BY PUBLICLY ASSERTING COMBATING POPULATION PROBLEM IS BASIC ELEMENT IN BATTLE AGAINST POVERTY.

3. ALONG WITH THIS SPATE OF PUBLICITY, GOE POPULATION CONTROL AGENCIES HAVE BEEN SPURRED TO NEW ACTIVITIES. WELL PUBLICIZED, SURPRISE VISIT BY PRIMIN MAMDUH SALEM TO POPULATION PLANNING AGENCY, JULY 10, HAS SIGNALLED HIGH LEVEL GOE INTEREST IN MORE ACTIVE POPULATION CONTROL MEASURES (REF B). IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT SALEM HAS ALSO CHAIRED FOUR RECENT MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL FOR POPULATION AND FAMILY PLANNING.

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4. ALL OF THIS IS ENCOURAGING, BUT THE DANGER EXISTS THAT AS WITH SO MANY THINGS IN EGYPT, INTEREST WILL LAG. WE ARE ANXIOUS TO KEEP THIS FROM HAPPENING. IN AN EFFORT TO STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT, THE AMBASSADOR HAS REQUESTED ICA AND AID OFFICERS TO WORK TOGETHER IN ORDER TO FEED PERTINENT INFORMATION TO INTERESTED EGYPTIAN JOURNALISTS WHO WANT TO WRITE MORE ON THE NEED FOR POPULATION CONTROL MEASURES AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO DO SO. ICA HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ALL OF THE AFOREMENTIONED JOURNALISTS, SEVERAL OF WHOM ARE PLANNING A SERIES OF FURTHER ARTICLES ON THE SUBJECT. THIS WILL, OF COURSE, HAVE TO BE HANDLED DISCREETLY AND IT WILL BE ESSENTIAL TO KEEP THE EGYPTIANS OUT IN FRONT IN THIS EFFORT. BUT THE OPPORTUNITY IS TOO GOOD TO MISS. ICA AND AID HAVE SOME MATERIAL ON HAND, BUT ICA HAS ASKED WASHINGTON FOR ADDITIONAL MATERIAL THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL. WE WOULD LIKE TO ENCOURAGE THESE WRITERS TO BUILD ON THEIR EARLIER ARTICLES BY HAMMERING HOME ON A SUSTAINED BASIS THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE TO TAKE EXPEDIENT REMEDIAL MEASURES, THE COSTS OF JOB CREATION IN EGYPT, AND OTHER RELATED FACTORS.

5. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO INTENDS TO TAKE UP THE SUBJECT AGAIN WITH SADAT ON AN EARLY OCCASION WHEN THE PRESIDENT IS NOT TOTALLY PREOCCUPIED WITH THE ME PEACE PROCESS. THE RECENT VISIBLE DEMONSTRATION OF THE PRIMIN'S INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT IS A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD. WHAT IS NOW NEEDED IS TO OBTAIN SADAT'S ACTIVE AND PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT OF THE NEED FOR VIGOROUS POPULATION CONTROL MEASURES. EILTS

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